1:Opler E-5 (1931-1937)1941
(ca. 1870) NT8 Eastern Apache NT8
Chiricahua

[P 3]

102
103
131
133
619

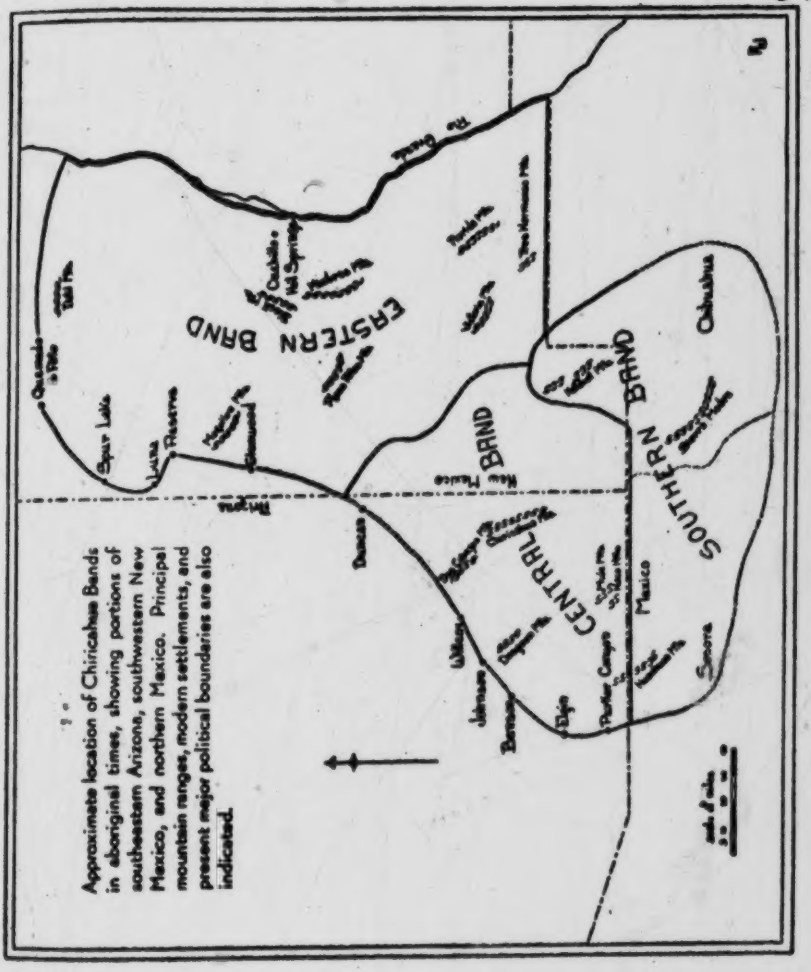
EASTERN BAND
CENTRAL BAND
SOUTHERN BAND
Approximate location of Chiricahua Bands in aboriginal times, showing portions of southeastern Arizona, southwestern New Mexico, and northern Mexico. Principal mountain ranges, modern settlements, and present major political boundaries are also indicated.

FIG. 1.—Map showing approximate location of Chiricahua bands in aboriginal times

1:Opler E-5 (1931-1937)1941
(ca. 1870) NT8 Eastern Apache NT8
Chiricahua
[facing p. 100]

PLATE V

535
133.

Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation

A MASKED DANCER

2: Castetter and Opler N, E-5 (1931-1934)1936
NT8 Eastern Apache NT8
CHIRICAHUA
MESCALERO

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

101 [484] These Apache were a highly mobile group and their geographical background is, therefore, not so well understood as is that of sedentary tribes. Also in the early days of Spanish penetration they were known by various names and confused with other groups. In view of these circumstances it is impracticable to try to fully describe their geographical setting; hence, only a few examples of this aspect of their environment will be presented.

133 137 The territory through which they ranged constituted a rich variety topographically and climatically, ranging from the flat lowlands of the Southwest, such as the Tularosa Basin, where sagebrush *(Artemisia filifolia)*, creosote bush, Mormon tea, cacti, yuccas, and mesquite comprise the characteristic vegetation; through the low hills where mescal and sotol abound; the foothills of the mountains where one-seeded juniper, piñon, and three-leaved sumac grow in abundance; to the higher elevations covered by growths of western yellow pine, spruce, and aspen. The mild, sunny winters and devastatingly hot summers of the lowlands contrasted greatly with the severe, snow-ridden winters of the mountains, although the mountains were cool and invigorating during other seasons of the year. The fauna varied with the elevation, too. In the flats were the prairie dogs, rabbits, and antelope; in the mountains, deer, elk, and mountain sheep.

132 133 136 133

221 [182] Of all this variety the Apache was the master. He moved with the seasonal change of weather, and followed the wild food harvests as they occurred. His adaptation and response to the ecological region in which he lived was sensitive and complete. When the colder weather came he removed to a lower altitude; in summer he was in the highlands again. When the mesquite and screwbean ripened on the flats, parties of Apache were there to gather them; when the hawthorn hips were ready in the highlands, Apache were nearby to take them. These people knew nature's calendar by heart, and no matter whether a grass seed ripened or a

[222]

2: Castetter and Opler N, E-5 (1931-1934)1936
NT8 Eastern Apache NT8
CHIRICAHUA
MESCALERO

certain animal's fur or flesh was at its best at the particular time, the Apache was present to share in the harvest. 221

In former times the country of the Apache was a difficult one for the uninitiated to cross. The lowlands were hot and dry and made thorny traveling. A glimpse of water turned out more often to be a mirage. Wide arroyos and washes, cut by the torrential flows which often follow the sudden rains of the surrounding mountains, barred the passage. The tangled brush of the foothills made progress slow, and the high ranges were a formidable barrier to one who was not acquainted with the passes and short cuts. 133 484

The Apache made perfect familiarity with this region in all its aspects an ally to his safety. He knew the water holes of the flats. He knew the travel distance from point to point and, therefore, how much food and water to carry. He was aware of the shortest passes and best hiding places in the mountains. If cut off from his own group, he knew where he was likely to find other parties of Apache camping, and he was trained to endure hardship and to shift for himself in this environment until he could make contact with friends. 133 484 182 823

But, though the Apache helped themselves freely to the plant and animal life of the lowlands, it must not be thought that they felt equally at home in both the plains and the mountains. After all, they were essentially mountain people. In the lowlands they had serious competitors, such as the Plains Indians, whom they acknowledged to be their equals and even their masters in knowledge of such country and its resources. But in the mountains they felt confident and secure. Here they had their retreats and their cave caches of food supply laid up against need and emergency. Army officers have commented often enough upon the difficulty of finding and besting the Apache in their mountain stations. 484 182 823 [186] [251] [648]

For the original habitat of the Mescalero, portions of southern New Mexico may be taken as an example. The west side of the great plains of New Mexico, Texas, and Mexico is a region consisting of isolated mountain ranges and intervening plains or broad, open valleys. Several of these val- 133

2: Castetter and Opler N, E-5 (1931-1934)1936
NT8 Eastern Apache NT8
CHIRICAHUA
MESCALERO

133 leys are traversed by the Pecos and Rio Grande rivers and in the region between these rivers are other valleys entirely enclosed by higher ground with, therefore, no draining outlets. The Tularosa Basin is one such enclosed area *(14:*11). It has a maximum length of about 150 miles and a maximum width of about sixty miles. The interior of the basin contains an extensive area of alkali flats and white gypsum sands about four thousand feet above sea level, to the south of which lies a large sandy desert with slight relief and lack of definite drainage. The northern half of the basin includes, between the mountain borders, a plain that descends gradually from the Mesa Jumanes, six thousand to seven thousand feet above sea level, to the alkali flats, but is broken by many hills, buttes, and ridges, and by a ribbon of extremely rough lava that extends along its central axis for more than forty miles (*14:*12). The altitude of the Mescalero Indian Reservation Agency is 6,627 feet *(7:*7.).

132 The climate of the basin is typical of the arid Southwest,
133 marked usually by a clear sky, dry rare atmosphere, warm days and cool nights, both in summer and winter. The aver-
[137] age annual rainfall of the lowland plains is about ten inches and thus supports a vegetation of characteristic desert appearance. The high mountains at the borders of the basin receive more precipitation, are covered with forests, and give rise to several small streams which flow into the basin. Owing chiefly to fluctuations in altitude the basin has a wide range of temperature.

133 As has already been mentioned, the favorite haunts of
[131] the Mescalero were in the San Andreas, Sacramento, and Guadalupe mountains. The San Andreas extend in a general north-south direction, and for a distance of eighty miles comprise the west wall of the Tularosa Basin, reaching a height of 9,040 feet in Salinas Peak. The range is remarkably continuous and unbroken, having only two principal notches and terminating at the south with San Agustin Peak, which is less than seven thousand feet above sea level (*14:*80).

2: Castetter and Opler N, E-5 (1931-1934)1936
NT8 Eastern Apache NT8
CHIRICAHUA
MESCALERO

The Sacramento Mountains, lying east of the southern part of the Tularosa Basin, form about fifty miles of its mountain wall and consist essentially of a great plateau rising in places to a height of more than nine thousand feet, descending gently eastward toward the Pecos Valley. On the west, however, it breaks off abruptly. The canyons are steep and short. Because the crest of the mountain is near the west side of the range, most of the drainage is eastward toward the Pecos River; only a narrow belt of the area sends its waters toward the west *(14:26)*.

The dominant vegetation of these first two mountain ranges, utilized by the Mescalero Apache, is piñon pine, one-seeded juniper, and western yellow pine. In the third range mentioned, the Guadalupe Mountains, are to be found the important mescal and sotol in abundance. On Meinzer and Hare's *(14:194)* map showing zones of native vegetation, in a portion of the Tularosa Basin, mesquite is a dominant plant, and it will be seen later that both the mesquite and yucca of this basin constituted important sources of food for these Indians.

Sulphur Spring Valley, together with the rest of that part of Arizona which lies south of the Gila, was purchased from Mexico in 1853 and until about 1873 was occupied exclusively by the Chiricahua Apache. The trough occupied by Sulphur Spring and Arivaipa Valleys is bordered by two parallel mountain chains which extend from the Gila River to Mexico. Included in the east chain are the Chiricahua Mountains, the largest in the region, which formerly constituted a favorite dwelling place of the Chiricahua Apache. In fact, the name Chiricahua was at first applied only to the Indians ranging in the vicinity of these mountains. These mountains extend southward from Apache Pass about thirty miles to the head of the San Bernadino drainage, twenty miles north of the Mexican boundary. The range is massive and in the northern portion rugged, although to the south, where it is wider and more massive, the crest line is remarkably even and a considerable portion of it more than nine thousand feet above sea

2: Castetter and Opler N, E-5 (1931-1934)1936
NT8 Eastern Apache NT8
CHIRICAHUA
MESCALERO

133 level. Numerous canyons cut both sides of the range, and, during the rainy season, many small streams flow a short distance into the valley *(15:22;9:4)*.

137 [132] Sulphur Spring Valley and adjacent mountains show marked variation in annual precipitation averaging, for the Chiricahua Mountains, more than twenty inches *(15:78-83)*. Meinzer's *(15:182-84)* description of the native vegetation of Sulphur Spring Valley drainage basin shows western yellow pine as the dominant vegetation on the higher levels of the Chiricahua Mountains. On the foothills and lower ranges junipers and oaks are common, and in ribbons of timber which stretch along the stream courses, oaks and sycamores are the characteristic vegetation. The higher parts of the valley adjacent to the mountains support what he terms upland grass and brush zone, extending over three-fourths of the valley. Most of it is covered with a light growth of various grasses, but in the central and southern parts of the valley it includes extensive tracts of shrubs, especially creosote *(Covillea glutinosa)*, as well as groves of Yucca. Lying on the middle and lower parts of the stream-built slopes is a zone of mesquite covering about one-sixth of the valley surface and also extending as scattered tracts on the upper slopes. A small portion of the valley area is covered with sagebrush *(Artemisia filifolia)*. Low tracts, partly enclosed by the mesquite areas, support a zone of alkali vegetation—shadscale *(Atriplex canescens)*, *Suaeda suffrutescens*, alkali sacaton or bunchgrass *(Sporobolus airoides)*, and Mexican salt grass *(Eragrostis obtusiflora)*. Finally, in the lowest part of the flat in the north basin is an area of about fifty square miles practically destitute of vegetation.

433 182 ## RELATION TO NATURAL SURROUNDINGS

It is especially important to understand the Apache's relation to his natural surroundings because his economy proceeded almost entirely on a hunting and gathering level. There was a late introduction of agriculture which will be